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REVELATION AND CREEDS

BY THE

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PREFACE

CHRISTIAN Revelation persuades us of its truth, not only by reason of its history and its perfect accord with our moral and spiritual needs, but also because it is the clear goal at which our intellect strives in groping fashion to arrive. History, conscience, and intellect are three distinct sources of argument which converge towards a concordant testimony to the reality and truth of the Christian Revelation. From history we get facts of a distinct and specific character, which more than suggest the presence of a Divine agency, and which are inseparably connected with the origin of Christianity; from man's own inward life we get the arguments based on conscience, on the need of moral order, and the recognition of a moral law; from reason we get the attempted solutions of the questions raised concerning the origin of the universe and particularly con-

cerning the origin and destiny of man himself. To give anything like a full proof of the Christian Revelation demands a detailed exposition of the concordant testimony of these different groups of witnesses, and would manifestly require a large volume. Thus, for instance, the historical proof includes the general history of Israel as a preparation for Christ, and a knowledge of its unique character, of its undeniably providential import, and of its prophetic contents; further, it includes some knowledge of the marvellous life of Christ, of the sublimity of His character, and of the teaching He brought to men; it also includes some knowledge of the Christian Church in its relation to Christ, in its spiritual power as illustrated in the lives of the saints, and in the providential nature of its perennial vitality.

The purpose of the present paper is not to set forth those converging lines of proof, but to remove, or rather to lessen, an antecedent perplexity of mind which too often prevents one from even wishing to give them serious attention. The perplexity has been created by the existence of so many creeds and sects. The paper therefore shows that a multiplicity of creeds does not destroy the valid claims of a Divine revelation, and that the Christian

revelation can easily make good its own *prima facie* claim to be at least seriously studied.

The few texts of Scripture which are cited have been taken from independent modern translations of critical Greek texts.

REVELATION AND CREEDS

ST THOMAS AQUINAS, although asserting the natural power of man's intelligence to reach many truths concerning the existence, the nature, and the character of God, God and
Reason nevertheless does not fail to point out that, under the common conditions of human life, this power is too generally weakened, or hampered, or even led astray, and that, in consequence, it stands in need of much help in its search after the highest truth. He says: "If a truth of this nature were left to the sole inquiry of reason, three disadvantages would follow. One is, that the knowledge of God would be confined to few. The discovery of truth is the fruit of studious inquiry. From this very many are hindered. Some are hindered by a constitutional unfitness, their nature being ill-disposed to the acquisition of knowledge. Others are hindered by the needs of business. Some again are hindered by

sloth. Thus, only with great labour of study is it possible to arrive at the searching out of the aforesaid truth; and this labour few are willing to undergo for sheer love of knowledge.

“Another disadvantage is that such as did arrive at the knowledge of the aforesaid truth would take a long time over it, on account of the profundity of such truth, and the many prerequisites to the study, and also because in youth and early manhood, the soul, tossed to and fro on the waves of passion, is not fit for the study of such high truth: only in settled age does the soul become prudent and scientific. Thus, if the only way open to the knowledge of God were the way of reason, the human race would dwell long in thick darkness of ignorance: as the knowledge of God, the best instrument for making men perfect and good, would accrue only to a few, and to those few after a considerable lapse of time.

“A third disadvantage is that, owing to the infirmity of our judgment and the perturbing force of imagination, there is some admixture of error in most of the investigations of human reason. This would be a reason to many for continuing to doubt even of the most accurate demonstrations, not perceiving the force of the demonstration, and seeing the divers judgments of divers persons who have the

name of being wise men. Besides, in the midst of much demonstrated truth there is sometimes an element of error, not demonstrated but asserted on the strength of some plausible and sophistic reasoning that is taken for a demonstration. And therefore it was necessary for the real truth concerning divine things to be presented to men with fixed certainty." (*God and His Creatures*, bk. i., c. iv.)

Experience and history justify the analysis of St Thomas; but they have also been appealed to in order to deny not only the validity of the natural judge-^{Comparative}ments of reason concerning the unseen ^{Religion} world, but still more the validity of any supposed help from above, and of what is referred to with contempt as theological speculation. Travellers have been gathering in many parts of the world a store of facts touching the religious forms of savage peoples; ancient civilisations, long dead and buried, are yielding up the contents of their religious creeds; the religious wisdom of the East, Brahmanism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, has been brought to our very doors, and all has been diligently compared with the sacred books of Judaism and Christianity to show how futile it is to appeal to a Divine revelation, and how hopeless to expect anything firm and sure, anything

strictly knowable, amid the tangled mass of religious confusion.

More than half a century ago, Dr Newman, considering the ideas then floating in the air, ventured to make the following forecast of the system of thought into which they would coalesce. He said: "Its fundamental dogma is, that nothing can be known for certain about the unseen world. This being taken for granted as a self-evident point, undeniable as soon as stated, it goes on, or will go on, to argue that, in consequence, the immense outlay which has been made of time, anxiety, and toil, of health, bodily and mental, upon theological researches, has been simply thrown away; nay, has been, not useless merely, but mischievous, inasmuch as it has indirectly thwarted the cultivation of studies of far greater promise and of an evident utility. . . . Christianity has been the bane of true knowledge, for it has turned the intellect away from what it can know, and occupied it in what it cannot. And the citizen of the world, the advocate of the human race, feels bitter indignation at those whom he holds to have been its misleaders and tyrants for two thousand years. . . . The new teacher, whom I am contemplating in the light of that nebula out of which he will be concentrated, echoes the

words of the early persecutor of Christians, that they are the enemies of the human race." (*A Form of Infidelity of the Day.*)

Not only has every form of religious creed been condemned as vain and empty babbling, the mere substitution of dreams for "Natural" realities, but a great variety of hypo- ^{Origin of}theses, though by no means consistent ^{Religion} with each other, have been suggested to account for the general origin of religion and to explain its nature and function. Animism, Fēṭishism, Eūhēmerism, Mythology, Symbolism, Sociology, Philology, Folk-lore, Anthropology, Ethnography, have all, with more or less plausibility, been advocated as explaining the mystery of religion. Now hypotheses are, in one respect at least, very like tales—one is good till another is told. The same facts may often be explained with equal plausibility by conflicting hypotheses. One of the purposes of this paper will therefore be to suggest another hypothesis to explain the facts of religious history.

Man, a living, thinking being, finds himself in the midst of a vast universe which, by its greatness, its power and unceasing working, its beneficent fruitfulness ^{An} and destroying scourges, its regu- ^{Hypothesis}larity so strangely chequered by violence, storm,

and catastrophe, strongly impresses itself on his mind and imagination. Suggested, nay, even forced upon him, by the world outside, there is formed a world of thought within him. What is the explanation of the great world around him? Whence its incessant activities at once so kindly and so severe? Is there behind all this a personal being like himself, but incomparably superior in intelligence and power? Why, too, has he himself been brought into this vast scheme of things, and why is he so soon to be snatched away again? Many thoughts come and go, but some are so persistent, so enduring, so obtrusive, that he cannot shake them off even if he would. Such is the thought of his own personal responsibility in face of an inward law clearly dividing between right and wrong, between truthfulness and lying, honesty and fraud, kindness and injustice. Hence arise surmises and misgivings about an unseen world to which these inward facts seem to point. What if a man all through his life utterly disregards every difference between right and wrong? Will he be able at the last to secure himself by the gates of death against the pursuit of consequences? Or is he liable after death to be summoned before some dread tribunal? The attempts to answer these

questions give occasion for the making of creeds.

So far there is nothing deeply scientific or metaphysical; there is little more than an almost instinctive movement of man's spirit to get behind the mystery of things and to enter, for his own good, into personal relations with a Being or Beings of superior power and intelligence, who, by reason of a multitude of impressions on the whole of man's spiritual being—impressions deep, subtle, living, and ever active—are dimly apprehended by the intellect. To this dim perception of the intellect are added the deeper whisperings of the heart with its vague hopes and yearnings, its questions of life and destiny, its need of social order, its strict law of right and wrong, its sense of frequent guilt, and, above all, its pressing burden of personal responsibility. We say, then, that some dim religious knowledge, some creed, however vague and rudimentary, is borne in upon man's consciousness by an inflexible law of conscience with its indelible distinction between right and wrong, by the haunting and insistent problems of origin and destiny, and by the multitude of impressions ever pouring in upon the soul from the very mysteriousness of the vast universe. As

Creed of
Conscience

long as the mysteriousness of this inward and outward world remains, so long will there be a fruitful soil of creeds. Science does not remove the mysteriousness, rather it enhances it. Everyone knows Huxley's expression of enlightened sorrow, in which he conceived the essence of religion to lie. "The little light of awakened human intelligence shines so mere a spark amidst the abyss of the unknown and unknowable; seems so insufficient to do more than illuminate the imperfections that cannot be remedied, the aspirations that cannot be realised, of man's own nature. But in this sadness, this consciousness of the limitation of man, this sense of an open secret which he cannot penetrate, lies the essence of all religion." We could accept this passage, if one serious fallacy in it were corrected. The sorrow of which he speaks is not the essence of religion, but only its occasion and stimulus; just as hunger is the occasion and stimulus of work, but by no means its essence. As work is the production of something to satisfy hunger, not its essence, so religion is productive of something to remove the sorrow of the soul, but is not the sorrow itself.

These first religious impressions may be

weakened and perverted, or fostered and developed. The savage perverts them into grotesque, debased, and horrifying forms; but there they are, although perverted, as they were there before suffering perversion. On the other hand, philosophy may try to lift them into purer regions, and thus show a nobler form of religion. The truths on which such religion would be based may be, and sometimes are, called a natural revelation. But this natural revelation, which is the fruit of man's own study, must not be confounded with the positive revelation of Christianity, which is a direct gift from God Himself, and therefore sets religion on another level. When then Mr Huxley, speaking of that sorrow, which he calls the essence of all religion, says that "the attempt to embody it in the forms furnished by the intellect is the origin of the higher theologies," we reply that, if by the higher theologies he means Christian theology, he is absolutely wrong. Christian theology is not based on any poetical sorrow at the aspect of the universe, but on the firm historical fact of Christ's appearance on earth. If by higher theologies he means natural religions, even then his words, apart from the fallacy already pointed out, are not true.

Natural
Religion

Natural religion is not based on a feeling of sorrow, but on a dim perception of living Beings, or a living Being, behind the visible forms of the world, with whom man, for his own welfare, desires to enter into communication.

How many forms of religion have risen, flourished, and decayed, or still survive, upon the earth! How could it be otherwise, when men were incessantly impelled to satisfy their soul's hunger for knowledge of divine things—those things which make for its inward peace? But every struggle to answer the questions which perplexed it, only made the soul the more eagerly desirous for the hidden God to show Himself, or at least to give some token of His will, and to make His voice heard. Will He keep silence for ever? Suppose God did at length speak, suppose a Divine revelation came to throw its light upon the strange and varied scene of man's dreaming, and guessing, and reasoning about the world invisible, should we be surprised to find truth and error closely joined together? Amid that ceaseless dreaming, and guessing, and reasoning were there no dreams to come true, no guesses to hit the mark, no reasonings to be found correct? Had it all been but the pursuit of vain shadows, to

which men have ever been driven by some inexorable fate? Impossible! Rather we should expect to find that, in spite of numerous aberrations, there had been some inspired dreams, some happy guesses, some sound reasonings. Thus many parallels would appear to the revealed religion itself—parallels of thought, or of imagination, or of hopes, or of sacred forms and practices. Some parallels here, some there; but the sum total brought together from many parts might be very considerable. Out of all the forms of religion that have existed in the world, one might make a mosaic of striking resemblance to revealed religion. It would be like the reflection of a man's face in troubled water. What inference would then be legitimately drawn from the resemblances? Could the resemblances throw any doubt or discredit on the revelation? On the contrary, they would but insinuate the need of it. To the dim gropings of the human spirit the revelation would say, in the words of St Paul, "What you, without knowing, revere, that I now proclaim to you." Thus we see in those dim visions a pathetic promise of the revelation to come, rather than a denial of its truth. Nay, considering the persistency of the religious sense, and the variety and extent of

Earnests of
a True
Revelation

its activities, the parallels seem fewer and less striking than might have been expected. At any rate, it is no disparagement of revelation to hold that "the heathen world is covered with fragments of truth, and foot-prints of God," or that "the truths which are revealed in their fulness in Christianity are contained, at least in shadow or in germ, in heathenism." Nay, if it be true that grace does not destroy nature, but perfects it, then revelation will not destroy the religious truths discovered by reason, but give them clearness, fulness, and deeper certainty. Thus those striking coincidences with Christianity, which are sometimes found in early religions, will only be fresh illustrations of that familiar historical phenomenon which has given rise to the saying, "Coming events cast their shadow before."

But it may further be replied that the similarities do not depend wholly on the unaided thought of human reason; that, in point of fact, the reason of man never has been left without some light from above. Unless we are prepared to reject as altogether groundless the general religious sense and tradition of mankind, we must attach some importance to the general appeal of mankind to a primitive revelation. Antecedently, and

unless positive argument to the contrary can be alleged, such general appeal to a primitive revelation has great weight. Nor are the facts of religious history opposed to the validity of this appeal; on the contrary, those very facts themselves have persuaded thoughtful students that "traces of a primitive revelation, defaced and disfigured though they be, are everywhere to be found."

When it is said, therefore, that the history of religion, with its creeds and sects of every kind, points to the conclusion that all religion is a vain and hopeless thing, we reply, Not at all. Rather, the ineradicable persistency of religion under such adverse circumstances, the exciting creation, day by day, of New Theologies, point to the conclusion that religion is an absolute necessity of man's moral and spiritual activity. But while the persistency of religion is a proof of its necessity, the multitude of creeds, which are certainly injurious to the interests of religion, does not prove the futility of religion, but only that religion needs a Divine revelation as its true basis, and that this revelation needs an accredited guardian. If, then, it can be shown as a fact that a Divine revelation has been given, with an accredited guardian to watch over it, the

Religion a
Necessity
of Man's
Nature

whole of the argument against religion, on the score of a multitude of creeds and sects, immediately collapses.

By Divine revelation, properly so called, is primarily meant the act whereby God immediately makes known certain truths to man, whether those truths, like the broad principles of morality and religion, fall within the compass of man's own power of intellectual discovery, or whether, like the facts reserved to itself by the free and secret will of God, they are altogether beyond the reach of man's observation. But the term revelation is also used to denote the sum of the truths thus made known by God. This sum of truths made known by God is called a creed. Therefore, without a creed, a Divine revelation is unintelligible, for a creed is only the sum of the truths revealed, which, for the simple reason that they have been revealed, are to be believed. We cannot reject the creed without rejecting the truths revealed; but if the revealed truths are rejected, what becomes of the revelation? It is as though it had never been. Moreover, if the revelation has been enshrined by God in a living organisation, if it is full, perfect, and unique, as I believe the Christian revelation to be, then a multi-

plicity of conflicting creeds is essentially at variance with it. They strike at it in two ways: first, they shatter the living organisation into disjointed fragments; next, they shatter the unity of the revelation itself. If then a multiplicity of Christian creeds and sects is allowable, it inevitably must happen that the beauty, harmony, unity, and majestic fulness of Christianity are absent when Christianity is compared, by students of comparative religion, with rival creeds. But if Christianity is stripped of its unique excellence by being reduced to a sort of common denominator of the sects calling themselves Christian, if it is, in consequence, represented only by a few beautiful fragments, we shall find that other religions also can show beautiful fragments, and thus Christianity is hard pressed in a comparison in which it ought easily to have triumphed. Nor is this the worst. For Christianity, being thus ousted from its legitimate ground of vantage and thrust out among a crowd of competing creeds, is simply made a fresh item in some plausible hypothesis about the origin, value, and function of religion in general, and stands, like a beggar suing for favour, at the proud gates of science.

This is what has really come to pass. Current theories of comparative religion are too

commonly based on the assumption that Christian revelation is identical with what is called Biblical Religion. Now that is an assumption against which the Catholic Church, the largest and most powerful Christian body, is, and always has been, a standing protest. She maintains that no one can properly understand the Christian revelation without understanding her, and that the Sacred Books must be taken together with her and only in living relation to her. She is older than *her* books, as the books themselves testify, and they are but one element in the fulness of her religious life.

As it is with the Catholic Church, so was it with Judaism. Judaism is older, much older, than its sacred literature. To say nothing of the promise made to our first parents, the covenant with Abraham preceded by centuries the earliest books of the Old Testament. But all the religious history of Israel turns upon that promise and that covenant, and describes the slow process of their realisation. Thus the revelation of Judaism is inseparable from its religious history—a history marked by a succession of clear and striking providences. Again, the religious history of Israel differs in a most essential particular from that of other nations. Israel “laid claim, not only to a

primitive, but to a continuous revelation from God." The destiny of Israel was shaped by a long line of prophets, of whom comparatively few have left anything in writing.

These two great institutions, Judaism and the Catholic Church, meet in Christ; the one being a preparation for his work, the other being its historical continuation. Judaism, Jesus Christ, the Catholic Church are three stupendous historical realities; and the three, as constituents of one supreme Divine revelation, are one. Compared with this unique revelation, this great mountain-chain of religious history stretching, to say the least, from Abraham to Pius X., what are the vague religious dreams and creeds of the scattered nations?

But let us look at the Catholic Church and her system a little closer. The first thing that strikes us is that she does not base her appeal to the world on any theory or speculation or hypothesis of her own concerning the unseen world. She is not the creator of the truth she teaches, but its witness and accredited guardian. Her creed is not authoritative as being the fruit of her religious genius, but because she herself has historically received it. Thus while others indulge their own religious subjectivism, feed their religious sentiment on any pasturage that seems to suit

The
Catholic
Position

their palate, and dream out their own religious dream, she gives testimony to fact. Her method lies in an appeal to fact; her very existence is to bear witness to a fact—the appearance upon earth of the Son of God in human form. This method she inherited from the immediate followers of Christ. “It is of what we ourselves have heard,” says St John, “of what we have seen with our own eyes, and touched with our own hands . . . that we now tell you” (1 John i.). “It was from the Lord,” says St Paul, “that I received the facts which, in turn, I handed on to you” (1 Cor. xi. 23). He then lays down the method of transmission for the future: “Brethren, stand your ground, and hold fast to the traditions which you have learned, whether by word of mouth or by letter” (2 Thess. ii. 15).

Now, facts are facts and will always remain facts. They cannot change and melt away as opinions do. Therefore, the fundamental facts of Christianity once made good by the clear evidence of the immediate witnesses can never decay or grow old, but must remain as true at the end as they were at the beginning. No future imaginable hypothesis, no progress of science, can make that not to be fact which is a fact. But the facts of Christianity were so real, solid, and evident to

Testimony

those who had experienced them that they could brook no contradiction, even on the authority of an angel from heaven. "Even if we—or if an angel from heaven—were to bring you a gospel different from that which we have already brought you, may he be accursed" (Gal. i. 8). And again, "Take care there is not someone who will lead you away by his philosophy and idle fancies. . . . For in Christ the fulness of God's nature dwells embodied, and in Him you are made complete" (Col. ii. 8, 9). So certain were the witnesses of their facts, that they gladly laid down their lives for the truth of their testimony. They died, not as men may sometimes die for their right to hold their own opinions, but as martyrs, that is, as witnesses. Now, that a man should die for his opinions, is no proof that his opinions are true; but that a man should die for the truth of his testimony, is a proof at least that he is a truthful witness. The case stands thus: the followers of Christ die for the truth of their testimony, given according to the convincing evidence of their own eyes and ears, and the Catholic Church has clung with firm tenacity to what she received. For myself, I must say that I find the surest ground of faith in the sublime obstinacy of the Catholic Church. Her revelation is contained in facts, not in theories.

Let us take that revelation at the beginning of its manifestation and in its first contact with the mind of man. If ever a religious belief could be said to be a part of man's very nature, the belief in Monotheism was a part of the nature of those Jews in Palestine who were contemporaries of Christ. To the Jew, God was the One real Being in the world. He was the Infinite, the Eternal, All-powerful, All-wise, Solitary in the supremacy of His exaltation, Unapproachable in majesty and holiness, whose name was too sacred even to be uttered by human lips. To put anything else even in remote comparison with Him was blasphemy so appalling that the very imagination recoiled from it with horror. When, therefore, we find that men of this firm and intense spirit of Monotheism speak of a man, with whom they had lived on terms of closest intimacy, in a way that clearly shows they held him to possess the Incommunicable Nature as his own true and proper possession, we could have guessed, even without their own testimony, that they must have been witnesses of a life and character so transcendent, and of works so wonderful and convincingly real, that no ingrained habit of mind could resist the cogency of the evidence. We can trace the stages of their mental revolution

Revelation
of Christ

through their first impressions of Christ's moral grandeur, their simple reverence for Him as a wise teacher, their readiness to listen, their dawning apprehension of His Messiahship, their growing feeling of a still more mysterious greatness, the melting away in their minds of any distinct limits between what belongs to Christ and what is proper to the Divine Nature; and, finally, their full acceptance of Christ's revelation concerning Himself, and their open profession of His Godhead. The enemies of Christ confirm the testimony of the Apostles; for, with a similar spirit of inflexible Monotheism, they unmistakably felt that He was making on His own behalf claims which set Him so high above all other men as to be blasphemously intrenching on the Divine prerogative. On this count they condemned Him to death. "Again the High Priest addressed Him. In the name of the ever-living God, he said, I now put you on your oath: tell us whether you are the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus replied, I am He. . . . Then the High Priest tore his robes and exclaimed, This is blasphemy. What further need have we of witnesses? See, you have just heard His blasphemy. What is your verdict? They replied, He deserves to die" (Matt. xxvi. 63-66). The Roman Governor again felt

how wonderful was the claim of Christ ; but, not having the spirit of Jewish Monotheism, he was only thrown into a state of fear and perplexity.

What a new world of religious thought is opened in the teaching of the Galilean fishermen ! They tell us of a man, meek, gentle, sympathetic ; a man of deep wisdom and snow-white purity, yet the friend of the outcast and sinful ; a mighty wonder-worker and kindly healer of the sorrows of others, but Himself encompassed with infirmity, suffering hunger and fatigue, tried as other men in all things except sin, dying on a cross for the sake of men, and rising again to take away from them the fear of death. This picture is the portrait of the Eternal God—God's own revelation of His own character. He who suffered and died, had said, "I and the Father are one," and again, when Philip said to Him, "Show us the Father, that is all we need," He replied, "Have I been all this time among you, and yet you, Philip, do not know Me? He who has seen Me has seen the Father also. How can you say, then, Show us the Father?" (John xiv. 8, 9). But together with Christ we must take all the words and appointments of Christ ; for in these we have the full revelation of Christ, and therefore of God. Now, Christ was ever speaking

of the Kingdom of God, a kingdom which He came to found upon earth, a kingdom of which the Apostle says that it is the very body of Christ and one with him. The organisation of this kingdom by Christ is clearly described. At present it will be enough simply to say that it rests on the institution of an Apostolate with powers of deep significance, with a rule and authority over others, with a promise of permanence till the end of time, under guidance and assistance from above, and that within the Apostolate itself we see the unique and prominent status of St Peter.

By revelation, therefore, we understand the historical presentation of this living, concrete, complex, but yet definite, fact; [so that if a man can say, I believe in the Catholic Church, he is making an act of faith in the *whole revelation of God*]. This one stupendous fact, constituting one complex revelation, is summed up in one creed. Half a loaf, we are accustomed to say, is better than no bread; and so even a fragment of this revelation is better than no creed at all. We may say of it, so far as it does effect any of that religious good for which the whole creed was given, "He who is not against you is on your side" (Luke ix. 50). But inasmuch as a partial creed stands in the way of a man's acceptance of the full revelation,

we are bound to apply to it that further saying of Christ, "Whoever is not with Me is against Me, and whoever is not gathering with Me (the metaphor belongs to the gathering in of harvest)—whoever is not gathering with Me is scattering abroad" (Luke xi. 23).

This fact has gone forth in its activity upon the broad stage of history. Its influence has been exercised upon the intellect, the **Influence of Revelation** imagination, the moral sense, the feeling, the social and domestic life of men, and from its impulse a distinctive moral world has arisen. Not everywhere have men responded with equal fruitfulness. Soils differ, and men are free. According to the words of the Master, the growth must be slow and various. The perfect consummation belongs to a remote future. What a subtle suggestion of this slowness, this remoteness, this need of responsiveness in the soil, is contained in the parable: "The Kingdom of God is as if a man scattered seed over the ground: he sleeps by night, and rises by day, while the seed sprouts and grows up, he knows not how. Of itself (for man is free to respond or to resist)—of itself the ground produces the crop—first the blade, then the ear, afterwards the full grain in the ear. But, when the crop is ready, immediately he puts in the sickle,

because the time of harvest has come" (Mark iv. 26-29). To understand something of the wide-reaching and over-abounding activities of the great fact in the world of human history, one has to travel no further than the British Museum. What may be seen there I shall allow Matthew Arnold to describe. He is inviting a Catholic to go there, and says: "He will find an immense Catholic work, the collection of the Abbé Migne, lording it over that whole region, reducing to insignificance the feeble Protestant forces which hang upon its skirts. Protestantism is duly represented indeed: the librarian knows his business too well to suffer it to be otherwise. All the varieties of Protestantism are there. . . . But how are all these divided against one another, and how, though they were all united, are they dwarfed by the Catholic Leviathan, their neighbour! Majestic in its blue and gold unity, this fills shelf after shelf and compartment after compartment, its right mounting up into heaven, among the white folios of the 'Acta Sanctorum,' its left plunging down into hell among the yellow octavos of the 'Law Digest.' Everything is there — religion, philosophy, history, biography, arts, sciences, bibliography, gossip. The work embraces the whole range of human interests;

like one of the great Middle-Age cathedrals, it is in itself a study for a life. Like the net in Scripture, it drags everything to land, good and bad, lay and ecclesiastical, sacred and profane, so that it be but matter of human concern. Wide-embracing as the power whose product it is! a power, for history at any rate, eminently *the* Church; not, perhaps, the church of the future, but indisputably the church of the past, and, in the past, the church of the multitude. . . . The mention of other religious bodies, or of their leaders, at once calls up in our mind the thought of men of a definite type as their adherents; the mention of Catholicism suggests no such special following. . . . Catholicism suggests,—what shall I say?—all the pell-mell of the men and women of Shakespeare's plays." (*Essays in Criticism.*)

When the Church went out into the world she found herself opposed by the strongest forces that can sway the soul of man. A vast army of beliefs, ideas, prejudices held the field against her and barred her way. The open violence of persecution was by no means what she had, humanly speaking, most to dread. Violence sooner or later spends itself, and even wins pity for the victim. Other influences, of which

The
Church's
Progress

men might be proud rather than ashamed, exerted their full force in unceasing antagonism—love of country, extending to the national beliefs, identifying them with patriotism, and making them a point of national honour; religious observances, connected from of old with what was proudest and most cherished in national history; literary traditions, inspired by the religious outlook of past generations, and made permanent by being enshrined in those classic writings which were instruments of liberal education. It might well seem a hopeless task for a few Jewish peasants to capture the thought of Greece and the imperial sway of Rome. Surely a hare-brained scheme to excite wild laughter! A suitable subject for displaying the polished power of wit and sarcasm, for turning neat epigrams, or filling out the scenes of a comedy! At first sight, a mad scheme certainly; yet it succeeded, and succeeded on every side.

The Church was not created to dream away her existence, sheltered from storm, as in some drowsy garden of lotus-eaters; she was set to sustain unremitting conflict amid the strenuous intellectual life of the keenest-minded peoples. In conflict, she made the ground sure beneath her feet; and she has maintained the conflict for two thousand years. Not in idleness has

she eaten her bread, but in pain and labour and struggle. She has had to meet dangers of every kind, from within and from without ; to cope, generation after generation, with new needs, new forms of thought, new social forces ; but throughout she has been able to apply her primitive revelation to all and to speak to all in a language they understood, yet withal keeping her primitive creed intact and holding firmly to every point of faith she has once solemnly defined. And to-day her children belong to every nation, are trained for this world under every system of education, and live under every form of civilisation and civil government. Apart from their faith, in what countless ways they are divided ! But they are bound together by their unity of belief in the Catholic Creed. Their unity reflects the unity of truth itself, as this in turn reflects the unity of God who revealed it. That truth can never pass away ; not only because it is the word of God, who is eternal, but also because it appeals to those questions and dim visions of the soul, those longings of the heart for better things, and those needs of the conscience which cannot die until the heart of man has changed its very nature. It was to such elemental needs and questions that the Church delivered her gifts and her message. She awaited the result with

confidence ; for, whatever opposition there may be in the present, she always holds the key of the central citadel. Let men once make trial of her teaching and they find that she possesses the true secret. "And in this way we shall come to know that we are loyal to the truth, and shall satisfy our consciences in (God's) presence . . . because God is greater than our hearts, and knows everything. . . . And this is His command—that we believe in His Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another" (1 John iii.).

Revelation, then, although essentially involving a creed and a store of truths—truths which constitute a distinct and definite Revelation form of religious knowledge—is not thus Involves a mere series of theological formulæ : a Creed it is a living system, full of grace and spiritual power, organised and set up by God in the midst of men. It cannot evolve into something different from itself, for the boundaries fixed by God cannot be removed. But this living system has been pouring out its influence upon the moral, religious and spiritual, as well as upon the intellectual nature of men. Hence have arisen those rich and varied forms of piety, of devotion, of religious observance ; hence, too, the famous schools of theological thought, and the solemn decrees of Popes and

General Councils. Set in the world of human life, the Church has had a double task: while making known her creed to men and impressing its life upon them, she has also had to preserve her creed and its inward life from every adverse reaction of the human mind. Revelation came to mould, not to be moulded; it is not to sink to the level of a mere human thing, and thus be subjected to the views, the fancies, the systems, or the wantonness of man. "To what shall I compare the Kingdom of God? It is like leaven which a woman takes and buries in three measures of meal, to work there till the whole is leavened" (Luke xiii.). The meal will never be allowed to smother the leaven.

Coming to men, the Church brought with her a world of new ideas, and had things **The Creed** to declare for which men had not as **the Basis—** yet coined names. She has to speak **not the** to men; but how shall she speak **Result of** **Speculation** without words? In these circumstances she takes words that men use, but from her way of using them she is able to invest them with a higher meaning. From human speech she chooses out the analogies that are nearest to the thoughts of her heart; and those that best translate her meaning she stamps with such a seal of authority that her children,

who repeat her creed, must employ her technical language. To fall short of this is to fall short of the creed itself. What ideas might have been originally attaching to those words is of very little moment. What is of moment is the meaning they have on the lips of the Church. Thus she uses the language of Greek philosophy, or of Roman law, or of modern science—it is all a matter of indifference to her, provided she can express her meaning—but she uses them, not to mould her doctrine according to their fashion, but to make her doctrine known to those who speak those languages. Thus she proceeds through successive generations, as occasion serves and need requires. When, therefore, people, as sometimes they do, accuse the Catholic Church of perverting, by her dogmatic utterances, the simplicity of the Gospel, it is manifest that their charge is wholly misplaced. And when Catholic theologians are accused of either turning the creed into mere speculation, or as proving, by their differences of opinion, the existence, within the Church, of conflicting creeds, and the instability of the creed itself, this is done only by those who know very little of the theologians. Rather, from the discussions of the theologians, Cardinal Newman drew a most striking instance of the clearness

and stability of the creed. He wrote: "(The Church) not only teaches in spite of those differences, but she has ever taught by means of them. Those very differences of Catholics on further points have themselves implied and brought out their absolute faith in the doctrines which are previous to them. The doctrines of faith are the common basis of the combatants, the ground on which they contend, their ultimate authority, and their arbitrating rule. They are assumed, and introduced, and commented on, and enforced, in every stage of the alternate disputation; and I will venture to say, that if you wish to get a good view of the unity, consistency, solidity, and reality of Catholic teaching, your best way is to get up the controversy on Grace, or on the Immaculate Conception. . . . To suppose that they perplex an inquirer . . . is to fancy that litigation destroys the principles and the science of law, or that spelling out words of five syllables makes a child forget his alphabet." (*Angl. Dif.*) Just as the classic writers of a nation become classics because they speak the real heart of the nation, because they say what many feel but cannot find utterance for their feeling, or say, as it has never been so well said before, what many have thought, so some theologians become classics in the department of theology

because they have so happily elucidated what is already contained in the faith of the Church.

One brief point more and I have done. The Church has to preserve not only her creed, but also that distinctive religious ^{The Creed} spirit for which the creed itself was ^{the Founda-} given. As man's waywardness of ^{tion of} thought is apt to pervert the creed ^{Religious} in one way, so his waywardness of spirit is apt. ^{Life} to pervert it in another way. The creed must inspire our religion towards God as well as our thinking about Him. Only in this way are we secured against the dangers of a purely subjective sentimentalism. Much self-introspection may become morbid unless quickened by the invigorating air from the broad field of Catholic doctrine. On the other hand, if the brooding spirit is also of a self-willed and vigorous nature, it runs the risk of giving to the creed a religious interpretation which merely reflects its own temper. Cardinal Newman has pointed out that the maxim, "An Englishman's house is his castle," is very salutary in politics, but most dangerous in moral conduct. Here the principle emphatically holds good: *Securus judicat orbis terrarum*; but the world of highest appeal in these deep matters of the spirit is the world of the acknowledged and canonised saints.

These show, in their lives and writings, the true form of the Christian religion; without their spirit of modesty, humility of heart, and reverential submission to visible authority, a man's worship ceases to be Christian and degenerates, to use again Newman's words, into the worship of his own dear self. This is the warning that was given us from the very beginning. Satan, says St Paul, can transform himself into an angel of light, and so lead us astray by the allurements of his spiritual beauty. "Dearly beloved," says St John, "believe not every spirit, but try the spirits to see whether they are from God. . . . The man who is beginning to know God listens to us, but he who is not a child of God does not listen to us. By this we can distinguish the spirit of truth from the spirit of error" (1 John iv. 1, 6).

Lord Macaulay, speaking from the point of view of a student of political history, confessed, or rather gave as his scientific conclusion from a study of the facts, that, "There is not, and there never was on this earth, a work of human policy so well deserving of examination as the Roman Catholic Church. The history of that Church joins together the two great ages of human civilisation." I will not stop to argue that the Church transcends every work of

human policy just because she is not human, but divine; I will content myself by citing the words of a more widely-known student of religion: "How different are all religions that ever were, from the lofty and unchangeable Catholic Church!"

APPENDIX I

SOME OBJECTIONS RAISED AT THE CLOSE OF THE LECTURE

QUESTION I.—"A non-Christian is led to the acceptance of Christianity by a train of reasoning. But the human mind is liable to error. Therefore a convert to Christianity can never be naturally and reasonably certain of the truths of his creed. The same applies to all creeds. Therefore all creeds are only more or less probable, and we can have no natural certainty in religion."

Reply.—In this question we have part of a broader question, touching the psychology of mental assents in general. On that point, Newman wrote a whole book—*The Grammar of Assent*. For a full answer to the question, we should therefore require more time than is now available. As a brief answer, we may say:—

(1) That the question leads to a conclusion which is based on a number of ambiguities. There is ambiguity in the phrase "train of reasoning," as if all mental certainty were brought about in one way, or were not valid unless brought about in one particular way.

The very trains of reasoning must start from mental certainties which cannot be derived from previous trains of reasoning ; otherwise we should be going back for ever and never be able to start a train of reasoning at all.

There is ambiguity in the statement that the human reason is liable to error. Does this mean that the human reason can never be certain of anything ? If the human reason can go wrong, it can also go right. To say that it does err sometimes, is to say nothing to the purpose, unless one proves that reason cannot but err in the matter of religion. If reason may sometimes be right, it may also be right in the matter of religion. Therefore the question of religion ought to be settled on its own merits, and not be strangled at the outset by the fallacy that human reason is liable to error. That there have been many religious errors in the world, we readily admit. But the fact that we are able to speak of them as errors, shows that we have a principle of certainty by which we can test them and brand them as errors. How could we detect error except by the light of truth and certainty ? Further, the very existence of such errors on a large scale is an antecedent argument for the necessity of revelation. At most, therefore, a liability to err would be an argument against the certainty of natural religion, but would be no argument against the certainty of a religion based on a Divine revelation which cannot err. From this it is plain how much error there is in the conclusion that "all creeds are only more or less probable," and that "we can have no natural certainty in religion."

(2) To speak more directly to the question, we may point out that certainty is of different kinds and is brought

about in different ways. One may be certain at the same time that two and two make four, that England was invaded by the Normans in 1066, that his son is not a cheat and a pickpocket. The world is full of certainties for which we should be at a loss to make up "trains of reasoning." Yet we are as certain as reasonable beings can reasonably require. If all that a reasonable being can reasonably require of God in attestation of a revealed religion has been given, is it not most unreasonable to refuse assent on the plea that human reason is liable to error? Has Christianity received such reasonably sufficient attestation? We say that it most certainly has received such sufficient attestation. Prophets and apostles could not all have been victims of delusion in their persuasion that the messages they delivered came to them from outside, and was not the outcome of their personal reflection. They were impelled by a superior power impressing upon them, with physical evidence which could brook no contradiction, both the revelation itself and the marks of its undoubtedly divine origin. Undeniable facts of history show, further, that these recipients of Divine revelation were not left without supernatural powers, as God's outward seal upon the inward conviction, already wrought in their minds by the revelation itself. Then, their own lofty moral character, their disinterestedness, their calm sanity, the sublimity and harmony of the message, the outward seal of God, and the other factors mentioned in the course of the paper, especially the providential and perennial history of the Catholic Church, prepared, as it was, from of old, by the prophetic history of Israel—all these things give a reasonably sufficient attestation that the message

offered to us by the Catholic Church is really divine. But if divine, it merits the highest and strongest act of faith. Thus our historic faith in plain and obvious facts becomes a stepping-stone to higher belief in the truths taught by Divine revelation. It is therefor emost untrue to say that "a convert to Christianity can never be reasonably certain of the truth of his creed." He can be reasonably certain of the divine origin of the message, and he can be reasonably certain that what a divine message teaches must be true.

QUESTION II.—"If God were really anxious and earnest in obtaining the acceptance of his true revelation by the human race, is it conceivable that He would allow all the confusion and misconception which result from different creeds, seeing that thus earnest souls are misled?"

Reply.—The question asked raises another: May man, as a moral agent, be reasonably permitted by God to be free? Ought men to be virtuous simply under an irresistible divine compulsion? Can there be no reasonable grounds why God should suffer in this world the evils arising from man's abuse of his own free-will? Because of the wide prevalence of sin, can we lawfully insinuate that God is not really anxious and earnest in obtaining the observance of the commandments? In simple truth, there is no confusion of creeds where the remedy given by God is accepted; and the Catholic Church is a proof of this. Earnest souls ought to see in the well-attested claims of the Catholic Church a remedy for that confusion and misconception which God never intended, but which, like other evils of a moral nature, come from the abuse of man's free-will. So strong is

this abuse that men, from an inordinate love of the unfettered freedom of private judgment, prefer to face all the evils of confusion rather than submit to what they call the bondage of belief. Is God answerable for this? Is the physician who has given a suitable remedy to be blamed if the patient refuses to take the remedy? The difficulty implied in the question would have great weight if God had not given to His revelation a reasonably sufficient attestation. But the attestation is reasonably sufficient.

QUESTION III.—“Is not the formulation of any creed a limitation of knowledge?”

Reply.—If by “knowledge” is meant the intellectual possession of truth, it is plain that, since the creed teaches truth revealed by God, to ask whether such teaching of truth is not a limitation of knowledge is like asking whether a giving is not the same as a taking away. A creed communicates knowledge, it does not limit it; what it does limit is the extent of ignorance and error about divine things. In scientific matters it is the boast of science that it enlarges knowledge by teaching things that ought to be known and accepted in the name of reason; creeds enlarge knowledge by teaching what ought to be known and accepted in the name of God.

QUESTION IV.—“Is not a natural religion (*i.e.*, a religion based on a natural knowledge of God, of our own nature, and our duty) enough to enable us to live aright and achieve our destiny?”

Reply.—Everything depends on what is meant by “living aright” and by “our destiny.” If by living

aright is meant living as God positively wishes us to live, then a merely natural religion is not enough. The very fact of a Divine revelation destroys such a supposition. For, since a revelation has been given, an obligation is imposed upon us to live the life prescribed by revelation, and not a life according to nature alone. Again, if by destiny is meant the supernatural end proposed to us by revelation and found in the Beatific Vision of God, then, since nature cannot claim what has only been promised to something higher than nature, a merely natural religion is not enough to enable us to achieve our destiny.

QUESTION V.—“Why should religion or religious life be bound up with a creed: so that one must believe to be saved?”

Reply.—The end of religion is the right determination of our personal relations to God. It must thus cover our ideas about God, our feeling towards Him, our obedient service and worship. Now, it is quite clear that all these things depend necessarily on our proper perception of the truth concerning God. If, then, God has revealed the truth, the acceptance of that truth will be the necessary basis of religion such as God requires. We cannot determine our right relations to God while refusing to accept the revealed creed. If, then, we cannot be saved without religion, neither can we be saved without believing, for religion is necessarily bound up with a creed.

QUESTION VI.—“Is not an intangible revelation (*i.e.*, one not strictly defined) more calculated to provoke

religious consciousness than a categoric (formulated) creed?"

Reply.—An intangible revelation might provoke many strange forms of consciousness and create numerous kinds of subjective theologies, but these things would be a most deadly substitute for the sober religion of a mind enlightened by the truth of Divine revelation. The calm truths of science may not provoke the exciting feelings caused by ghost-stories told in the twilight, but they are much safer guides of life.

APPENDIX II

Books that may be consulted:—

Jevons.—*An Introduction to the Study of Religion.*

Morris Jastrow.—*The Study of Religion.*

Max Müller.—*Introduction to Science of Religion, Origin and Growth of Religion, Natural Religion, Physical Religion, Anthropological Religion, Psychological Religion.*

Tylor.—*Primitive Culture.*

Frazer.—*The Golden Bough.*

Lang.—*Myth, Cult, and Religion; The Making of Religion; Modern Mythology; Magic and Religion.*

Flinders Petrie.—*History of Egypt.*

Robertson Smith.—*Religion of the Semites, Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia, Prophets of Israel.*

Montefiore.—*Lectures on Origin and Growth of Religion.*

Davidson.—*Old Testament Prophecy.*

Hopkins.—*Christ in India* (India Old and New).

Réville.—*Prolegomena of History of Religions.*

Ladd.—*Philosophy of Religion.*

Encyclopædia Britannica.—Articles under headings
“Religions,” “Animism,” “Fetichism,” “Totem-
ism,” “Anthropology,” etc.

Jewish Encyclopedia (First Volume).

Schanz.—*A Christian Apology.*

De La Saussaye.—*Manuel d'Histoire des Religions*
(Hubert-Lévy).

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